

# IndyCar Media Conference

Friday April 5, 2019

## Colton Herta

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with Colton Herta, driver of the No. 88 GESS International Honda for Harding Steinbrenner Racing. Second fastest today of both overall practice sessions for the Honda Indy Grand Prix of Alabama. Take us through both practice sessions today and the things that you worked on and ultimately the speed that you found.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I think we had a pretty good baseline coming here. We worked a lot on the sim. I know a lot of the guys were in the sim, so we got in there Tuesday after COTA, and we found some good stuff, and that translated into our starting setup a little bit. So we already had a baseline on what we felt comfortable with, and moving forward, just little things, spring changes, maybe a little bit in the damping, but kind of general changes, not too big a changes. We did do a dif change over lunch, which I'm not sure how that went. But yeah, just normal changes, I guess.

THE MODERATOR: What have the past two weeks been like for you? Obviously quite the whirlwind following your win at the IndyCar Classic on March 24. A lot of things going on. You went to New York, you were actually here right before you went to New York doing some work to promote this race. Has it been an absolute whirlwind?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, it's nice. I don't mind doing this stuff if this is what comes with winning. Yeah, I enjoyed it. I always love going to New York. I got to go see opening day, got to do 30 Rock, as well, which was cool to see where they film SNL. Yeah, I got to do a lot of media, and yeah, it's nice to kind of be done with the media and start focusing on the driving. I always enjoy that part a little bit more. But yeah, it was nice to get down here a little early, as well, and promote the race.

THE MODERATOR: Speaking of the driving, you mentioned how your day went today, but this course in particular, what do you find most challenging about it? What are some of your favorite parts of the track?

COLTON HERTA: There's so much that's challenging about it. The whole thing, it's a bunch of combination corners, so corners left followed by right, so you can give in the left-handers and get in the right-handers or you can get in the left-handers and give the right-handers. You know, there's always time to find. You can never drive a perfect lap here. It's so different. You could have a great setup and feel like you did a

killer lap time and come in and be a half a second off. It's just that type of place. It's probably the toughest track that we go to. It's definitely the most technical for the driving style, and quite a bit different from COTA. 1,600 PSI brake pressure with COTA and then you come here and you're getting 1,000, so it's a completely different track.

**Q. Colton, when the rules were at COTA, no track limits, it was kind of the wild, wild west show. Here it's a lot more technical. If you go off line, if you experience the second practice --**

COLTON HERTA: There's no -- yeah, you're out.

**Q. How different could those tracks be, and how much more precise is a driver going to have to be here?**

COLTON HERTA: It's different. You still had to be extremely precise at COTA because with Turn 19, how bumpy it was, there actually was a preferred line. Whether people found it or not there was a really good line through there. And it's the same here. Obviously there's a little bit more risk touching the wall and stuff, so you have that going for you, but yeah, both styles take skill, and I think that kind of shows the best ability of IndyCar is how we transfer it from different tracks to tracks and still cope with different situations.

**Q. I think I caught part of an interview where you were being asked about -- I assume you had an opportunity to run both the red and black tires this afternoon. Can you kind of talk about what you found were the differences?**

COLTON HERTA: Massive differences. Hinch was the only one that I saw that actually got quicker on the reds. So I'm not really sure what's going on. The reds felt kind of awkward for some reason. They didn't feel good at all. And I thought it was just me when I was out on track, but it looks like a general trend. I actually went half a second slower on reds. So it's definitely something to look at. It's going to be changing up the tire strategies and what people are going to be doing in practice compared to tires for qualifying and the race, but yeah, it's definitely a different situation. I'm not sure what's going on, but it should be a mix-up. I'm extremely puzzled and kind of threw out my whole qualifying prediction on what tires we were going to run and the whole plan of the weekend has changed.

**Q. I just wondered how much of a comfort zone you have here because you did so well in Indy Lights. Is it a track you're looking forward to?**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I enjoy driving on the track. Racing on the track is a little bit more difficult. There's not a lot of passing opportunities, but obviously pit stops open that up a lot, and it's actually usually a pretty good race here, depending on how good the passing is. But yeah, it's a track I enjoy. I've had a few poles here in Indy Lights, and it's just a beautiful facility, too. You know, it's not as green as it usually is, but it's still got the amazing stat use, and yeah, it's an incredible facility.

**Q. Given what you went through today, though, you said you were kind of thrown for a loop on qualifying. I was wondering what you're expecting come tomorrow and how critical is it to qualify here at a place like this?**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, it'll be very interesting because we definitely got the balance wrong on our reds, but if we can find that half a second to match the black tires, it would have to be a pretty good lap, and the black lap that I put together, even though it was quicker in time, I don't think it was a great representation of what we could have done, but it's going to be very interesting because I think if you nail a red lap, you could go as fast as the blacks, but I feel like the blacks are easier to do that lap time. I honestly have to clue what it tell you. I've never been in this situation before. I think even guys like Ryan Hunter-Reay and guys like Rossi haven't been in this situation before. It's very strange to see this, and I've never seen it.

It'll be a very interesting weekend. It's supposed to rain tomorrow, so we'll see. Maybe we don't have to worry about that in qualifying. But we're definitely going to have to worry about it sometime.

**Q. Colton, your birthday was March 30th, so age is kind of catching up to you now. At any point have you ever woke up one day and said to yourself, did I really do that?**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, it's been like every day since I've done it it's been like that. I couldn't believe it when it happened, and it's still kind of hard to believe. And it was a blessing, but it was also terrible because now I just want to win every race now that I have that feeling of winning an IndyCar race, and it's pretty incredible. It's hard to describe. But yeah, I definitely have a little bit more of a fire in my belly to go out there and get it done this weekend.